

Communion Assistant Guidelines

(Updated Jan. 09)

These are current guidelines for those who are serving as communion assistants at Saint Luke's Lutheran Church.

Let us begin by stating what an important and valuable ministry this is—as you will assist in the distribution of our Lord's precious Body and Blood, for those who need His incarnate presence in their lives. At the heart of Lutheran worship has always been Word and Sacrament—the means of grace. We embrace an evangelical and catholic theological understanding of the Sacrament of the Altar, and in this time when worship is observed among Christians as more people-centered and less glorification of God, we have as our goal at Saint Luke's to celebrate both Word and Sacrament with dignity, reverence, and a sense of awesomeness in the presence of God. We trust you share these goals, and will do everything in your ability to make them a reality within our worship life as a parish.

As you know, a Master Server Schedule is printed each month in the Saint Luke's Parish Newsletter. Please check the schedule as soon as it arrives to see when you are scheduled to serve. If you do not receive a newsletter, or have misplaced yours, you can always access it online at www.saintlukes-cs.org. If you are unable to serve when scheduled, please call someone else on the list and trade Sundays, then call Terri in the church office (598-4397) to let her know of the switch. If you are unable to find someone who will switch, call Deaconess Kathy, 593-0665, or Pastor Dave, 593-2462 (home) or 650-8171 (cell) so that we are aware beforehand that we will need to find a replacement.

Because you will be assisting as one of the servers at the altar, we ask all of our communion assistants to vest before serving. This emphasizes the respect we have for "altar service", and the white robe symbolizes "putting on Christ" in Baptism. It also is a great "equalizer"—no one will be able to notice your clothing. At the same time, let me remind you that when serving at the altar, jewelry should be kept at a minimum and should be modest and unobtrusive. The same is true for makeup. Similarly, when serving at the altar, it is best not to wear heavy or effusive cologne or perfume. Bear in mind, the only clothing that will be noticeable are shoes/sandals/footwear! It is preferable that altar servers not wear sneakers or tennis shoes—but please use your own good judgment. **The general rule is when serving at the altar, do nothing and wear nothing that draws attention to you—the focus is to be on Christ—we are simply serving as instruments.**

Before the service begins, go to the Choir Room, off of Luther Hall, and find an alb (white/flax robe) that fits you. If you need help, find Deaconess Kathy or the assisting minister for the day. They will be able to help you find an appropriate alb and cincture (rope), and show you how to put them on. Place them somewhere in the office where you can quickly find them and vest. During the offering, go to the office and put on the alb. You may then return to the sanctuary—sitting wherever you'd like.

As we begin to sing the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy...), go to the communion rail, reverence the altar, and kneel with the other acolytes and assisting ministers so that you are present for the Eucharistic Prayer. (*If you are unable, you do not need to kneel.*) After the Lord's Prayer and Fraction (breaking of the bread), Deaconess Kathy will come forward to be communed and assist the presiding minister with the chalice, as you who are serving are communed. When Deaconess Kathy rises, please remain kneeling until you have communed. Then stand, reverence the altar, and come behind the altar to the right (as you face the altar). Normally, the assisting minister with the chalice will follow the presiding minister, and you will follow the assisting minister with the individual communion trays. We are now using two "sets" of assistants to distribute cup and individual glasses. This allows time for your to change trays and re-fill the chalice, keeping the distribution continuing. Communicants are asked to place their hand on their chest, if they want to commune with individual glasses, so please watch for that sign. As communicants take a filled individual glass from the communion tray, you say, "***The Blood of Christ, shed for you.***" As distribution progresses, you will need to watch to make sure you have sufficient filled glasses for an entire table. If the tray you are holding is emptied, (or about empty) simply take a full one before the next table. There is no problem with stepping to the back of the altar to switch trays in the midst of a table, if necessary. Just be sure to note who the next person will be to commune when you return.

After all have communed, if there are elderly/infirm communicants who can not approach the altar, the presiding minister may signal for you to follow him, and the two of you will go to communicate those who are seated. Please watch to be aware if these communicants need assistance taking up an individual glass, or replacing the empty one. As we return to the altar, simply place the empty glass(es) in the communion rail. We do not reverence the altar when carrying either the consecrated Body and Blood of our Lord. Then restack the communion trays, return to the front of the altar, reverence the altar, then depart down the center aisle. You may then disrobe, or if you prefer, remain vested until the conclusion of the service. Please be sure to return your alb to its hanger, and to the Choir Room.

Thank you so much for your willingness to assist in the distribution of the Lord's precious Body and Blood! Your ministry is vital to the spiritual health and vitality of our members and our congregation. Should you have questions, please call Deaconess Kathy or Pastor Dave, at the numbers above. It is always better to call before Sunday, if possible, that Sunday morning may be the more relaxed and unhurried.

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